

**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 5**

**DATE:** October 30, 2000

**SUBJECT:** Reports of Significant Developments and Activities  
Ending on October 23, 2000

**FROM:** William E. Muno, Director  
Superfund Division

**TO:** Francis X. Lyons  
Regional Administrator

David A. Ullrich  
Deputy Regional Administrator

The activities listed below are organized by site-specific activities, other significant developments, and training/conferences:

**SITE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES**

**Removal Action Completed (Gasoline Spill), McKinley Creek,  
Painesville, Ohio**

On October 13, 2000, the Oil Pollution Act (OPA) removal action at the McKinley Creek Gasoline Spill was completed. The removal action concluded with the transportation and disposal of approximately 310 cubic yards of petroleum-contaminated soil to a landfill. On September 14, 2000, the Lake County Health Department requested the assistance of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) in determining the source of the release. On September 26, 2000, U.S. EPA mobilized the Emergency and Rapid Response Services (ERRS) contractor and Superfund Technical Assessment and Response Team (START) to the site to begin response activities. Approximately 460 linear feet of abandoned storm sewer was excavated and removed. The excavation was backfilled with clean clay material.

No direct connections to the storm sewer were identified. U.S. EPA was unable to conclusively identify the exact source of the release to the storm sewer. On September 26, 2000, the Ohio Bureau of Underground Storage Tank Regulations (BUSTR)

conducted an inspection of a Sunoco station upgradient of the site and found a leaking valve. BUSTR is requiring the station to conduct a Tier 1 investigation, which requires the station to install 3 monitoring wells, 3 soil borings, and collect 3 soil samples within 180 days. The Sunoco station also has a known hydrocarbon-contaminated well. BUSTR has also placed a Marathon station across the street from the Sunoco station in their Tier I program due to known hydrocarbon contamination on that property.

Contact: Jim Augustyn (440-250-1742)

**Emergency Response (Mercury), Riverforest High School, Hobart, Indiana**

On October 13, 2000, the Riverforest High School in Hobart, Indiana, requested assistance from the U.S. EPA for a mercury spill that occurred in one of the classrooms. On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) Stavros Emmanouil initiated a removal action. During this action the students that were exposed to mercury were screened and decontaminated, all of the material contaminated with mercury was removed from the school, and staged in a safe area. Air sampling took place and the removal action was completed (except transportation and disposal) on October 15, 2000. After final air sampling, all areas of the school were found to be safe.

A meeting was conducted at the high school on October 17, 2000, to discuss the cleanup, decontamination, and disposal of mercury that spilled from a broken vial in a science lab. Approximately 30 students and parents attended the meeting. School officials briefed the parents. OSC's Stavros Emmanouil and Bill Simes, and Civil Investigator Joe Kawecky, gave a visual presentation of the cleanup. Ginny Narsete, Public Affairs Specialist, attended, wrote a fact sheet, discussed her role, and handled media calls. The principal stated he was going to personally do some outreach in other schools and ask other schools to dispose of their mercury. U.S. EPA staff was asked to return to the school later this year to discuss other environmental hazards. Stories were published in the local papers. Joe Kawecky is on the board of the Lake County Emergency Planning committee and plans on initiating a plan for disposing of mercury in schools.

Contacts: Stavros Emmanouil (312-886-1768)

Ginny Narsete (312-886-4359)

Joe Kawecky (312-886-7336)

Bill Simes (312-886-1337)

**Emergency Response (Mercury), Portage High School, Portage, Indiana**

On October 18, 2000, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM), the Portage Fire Department, and the Portage High School requested assistance from the U.S. EPA for a mercury spill that occurred in the high school. On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) Stavros Emmanouil and two Superfund Technical Assistance & Response Team (START) members arrived at the high school within two hours after the initial request. Air sampling was conducted at the school, and the spill location was identified and isolated. All workers (approximately 30) that have been exposed to the mercury were screened for potential exposure and they were released shortly thereafter. The air sampling readings indicated that the mercury levels do not pose a threat to human health and the environment. However, a mercury cleanup needs to be done in the area where the mercury was initially found (sink on the third floor). The cleanup will be conducted by a contractor that will be hired by the school under the oversight of IDEM.

Contact: Stavros Emmanouil (312-886-1768)

**Response (Mercury Release), Residence, Taylor, Michigan**

Acting on a request from the Michigan Department of Community Health, On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) Robert Buckley responded, with the Superfund Technical Assistance & Response Team (START) support, to an apartment complex in Taylor, Michigan. A high school student had brought home a mercury blood pressure gauge from her nursing class. Mercury spilled from the device and splattered on her siblings. Quick action by the mother including changing the kids clothes and evacuation to relatives lessened exposure. A cleanup crew was contracted by the school and U.S. EPA and START monitored the removal and provided air testing using the Lumex Mercury Detector and confirmation tube samples. Based on the results of the tube samples, Michigan Department of Community Health and the Wayne County Health Department cleared the residence for reoccupation on October 19, 2000.

Contact: Robert Buckley (734-692-7662)

**Removal Start, Mahoningside Power Plant Site, Warren, Ohio**

On October 10, 2000, U.S. EPA's Emergency Response Branch mobilized to conduct a time-critical cleanup of the Mahoningside Power Plant site, located in Warren, Trumbull County, Ohio. The site, formerly known as the Warren Water and Light Company, is contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and mercury. High levels of PCB contamination were discovered this past Spring during the City of Warren's demolition of the former power plant. The City's contractors have removed over 400 tons of contaminated debris from the structure and have established a de-watering and water treatment system. As groundwater and precipitation enters the structure, it is contained and treated to ensure that PCB contamination does not leave the site.

In July 2000, the City of Warren requested U.S. EPA assistance due to the City's lack of appropriate funding. In early August, U.S. EPA obligated emergency funding and assumed control of the existing de-watering and water treatment operation and has maintained it to date. U.S. EPA is currently removing PCB contaminated debris from the basement sumps, drains, and piping of the former structure. In addition, U.S. EPA will assess the ground underneath and around the existing basement structure to determine if PCB contamination has migrated from the building site; and, will conduct sampling and assess the sediments in the Mahoning River near the site for PCB contamination. Based on its findings, U.S. EPA will recommend further removal or remedial actions that would need to take place.

Contact: Jim Augustyn (440-692-7642)

**Settlement, Morningstar Group Incorporated, Bristol, Wisconsin**

On September 28, 2000, U.S. EPA entered into a Consent Agreement and Final Order to resolve a complaint issued against Morningstar Group Incorporated. U.S. EPA issued an Administrative Complaint against this facility assessing \$27,500 in penalties for failing to immediately notify the National Response Center (NRC) of a 1,299 pound release of ammonia. Ammonia is a Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) hazardous substance with a 100 pound reportable quantity. This release was 12 times the reportable quantity (RQ) and was reported to the National Response Center (NRC) approximately 20 hours after occurrence. Morningstar Group Incorporated has agreed to pay

a civil penalty of \$16,500 to resolve this Complaint.

Contact: Ruth McNamara (312-353-3193)

**Settlement, Standard Process Inc., Palmyra, Wisconsin**

On October 11, 2000, U.S. EPA filed an Administrative Complaint and entered into a Consent Agreement and Final Order with Standard Process, Inc. U.S. EPA issued the Administrative Complaint against this facility assessing \$21,010 in penalties for failing to immediately notify the National Response Center (NRC) of three releases (800 pounds, 6,000 pounds, 245 pounds) of ammonia. Ammonia is a Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) hazardous substance with a 100 pound reportable quantity. These releases occurred from pressure relief valves. Standard Process, Inc., has agreed to pay a civil penalty of \$3,414 and conduct a Supplemental Environmental Project totaling \$18,550 to resolve this Complaint. Standard Process will install a Manning System multi-channel gas detection system at this facility. This advanced or early detection will act as a tool in mitigating the potential for ammonia to be released into the environment.

Contact: Ruth McNamara (312-353-3193)

**Tour/Final Inspection, Penta Wood Products Superfund Site, Burnett County, Wisconsin**

On September 26, 2000, a site tour, combined with a final inspection was held at the Penta Wood Products Superfund site in Burnett County, Wisconsin. Eight citizens and two reporters were shown the inside of the groundwater treatment building as well as the grounds of the site. Inside the trailer, photo boards and an album were on display so visitors could see the progress made at the site since 1994.

Contacts: Susan Pastor (312-353-1325)  
Tony Rutter (312-886-8961)

**Removal (Open House), Boerke Site, Oak Creek, Wisconsin**

On October 2 and 10, 2000, U.S. EPA hosted an open house and public hearing in conjunction with the start of the 30-day public comment period for the proposed plan for the Boerke

site. Approximately 15 people attended each meeting, including local media, City officials, and a State Senator. Overall, the public seemed pleased with the proposed remedy, which involves excavation, treatment and off-site disposal of arsenic- contaminated material. U.S. EPA will continue to accept public comments until October 31, 2000.

Contacts: Bri Bill (312-353-6646)  
Marla Littlefield (312-353-8501)  
Mike Collins (312-886-64360)

## OTHER SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

### MichCon Mercury, Wayne County, Michigan

To date, 23 homes have been screened for the presence of mercury vapor. Of those 23 homes, 10 of the homes were found to contain mercury vapor concentrations in ambient air above 1,000 nanograms per cubic meter (ng/m<sup>3</sup>). These homes are being subsequently cleaned and re-screened, at least once, and in some instances more than five times. On October 6, 2000, a homeowner with three small children, one around six months old, informed U.S. EPA and the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) that his children had adverse health effects. Tube sample results from the Response, Engineering, and Analytical Contract (REAC) have confirmed elevated mercury vapor concentrations in this home. During the screening of another home, U.S. EPA was informed by the homeowner that after the mercury spill, about seven years ago, their son began having adverse health effects. Testing has shown elevated blood levels of mercury.

MichCon has yet to provide U.S. EPA with a list of houses that have had, or currently contain, mercury-containing regulators so that these houses can be screened. MichCon has formally responded to U.S. EPA's 104(e) Information Request during the week of October 9, 2000. U.S. EPA issued a second press release on October 11, 2000, and media interest was moderate. MDCH and U.S. EPA are pressing the State's largest utility, Consumers Energy, to initiate a similar screening in 14 houses that it acknowledges as having had mercury spills and associated cleanups since 1980. Like MichCon, Consumers refuses to commit to screening or even identifying all houses within its service area that have had mercury regulators.

Contact: Ralph Dollhopf (734-692-7682)

### Award Received and To be Published, Ginny Narsete's: "Crisis Communications Pocket Field Guide", Washington, D.C.

The Office of Superfund and Emergency Response at U.S. EPA Headquarters (HQ) in Washington, D.C. recognized Ginny Narsete, Emergency Response Branch, Public Affairs Specialist, for a crisis communications pocket field guide she wrote and designed for U.S. EPA. This guidebook provides a step-by-step guideline for On-Scene Coordinators, Community Involvement



Coordinators, and communicators to use when responding to emergencies. Its contents include samples and forms of fill in the blank press releases, how to conduct community meetings, communications strategies in the field, and how to handle media relations. The pocket guide is currently under product review at U.S. EPA HQ and will be published for national distribution later this year. The award was entitled, "Friend of Office of Emergency and Remedial Response," for accomplishing a task based on her field experience while responding to emergency response calls.

Contact: Ginny Narsete (312-886-4359)

### **TRAINING/CONFERENCES**

#### **Geophysical Presentation, OSWER/ORD Engineering Forum, Charleston, South Carolina**

On October 23, 2000, James Ursic and Mark Vendl of the Field Services Section (FSS) gave a presentation to the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response/Office of Research and Development (OSWER/ORD) Engineering Forum on new geophysical instruments available for site characterization. The Engineering Forum is a group of engineers and other technical support staff in the Superfund and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) programs from all ten Regions who meet to exchange up-to-date information related to engineering remedial issues at Superfund and RCRA sites. After a short lecture, a demonstration was conducted at a park across from the hotel which was the original location of the Citadel military college. Two state-of-the-art instruments recently purchased by Region 5 were demonstrated: a cesium magnetometer with an integrated global positioning system, and a cart-mounted ground penetrating radar system. During the demonstration, part of a buried wall of the Citadel was located.

Contacts: Mark Vendl (312-886-0405)  
James Ursic (312-353-1526)

#### **Vermiculite Public Meeting, Minneapolis, Minnesota**

On September 20, 2000, U.S. EPA representatives attended the Logan Park Neighborhood Association meeting to update the

community on vermiculite and asbestos contamination in this northeast Minneapolis neighborhood. Over 120 residents attended the meeting. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and the Minnesota State health department were present and assisted U.S. EPA in answering several of the questions on the status of the Western Minerals site and health issues. Press coverage included four major television networks, newspapers, and Minnesota public radio. U.S. EPA outreach efforts will continue including: providing the 800 number for setting up visual inspections of yards and referrals to other agencies (MPCA, State Health); workshops on vermiculite to educate residents on asbestos; public meetings and availability sessions; facts sheets and update letters; and an U.S. EPA presence on-site throughout the duration of the cleanup.

Contacts: Leo Rosales (312-353-6198)  
Sonia Vega (312-886-7191)  
Mark Johnson (312-353-9298)

cc: Steve Herman (OECA)  
Barry Breen (OECA)  
Tim Fields (OSWER)  
Steve Luftig (OSWER)  
Larry Reed (OERR)  
Larry Zaragoza (OSWER)  
Region 5 State Superfund Coordinators  
Division/Office Directors  
ORA State Coordinators  
Regional Team Managers